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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates an intensive 2-year Dutch training course, "Magistrum," as one possible answer to the training needs of principals. The paper posits the following question: "Is the Magistrum, as an illustrative example of an intensive training, an effective answer to the principals' need for professional development?" Preliminary findings are reported because data analysis is still in progress. The paper briefly describes the conceptual framework, with the central idea of professional development as an interactive and contextualized learning process. Next, it reports on the specific research approach in the study, that of semistructured interviews. The data suggest the Magistrum is a "timeout" for principals; the training offers them ways to "refuel." They can take a break while studying new theories, skills, and visions, all of which happen in intensive exchanges with other principals coping with the same challenges. Two patterns emerged in the meanings of "timeout": the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and insights before principals returned to their schools; and a period of time that leads to more fundamental and pivotal changes in perspective. An appendix contains a description of the training program. (Contains 61 references.) (DFR)

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EVALUATION OF A TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Paper for the symposium 'New Policy Contexts, New Challenges for Principals'
(Flemish Association for Educational Research)

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1. Introduction

In almost the entire western world, social, economic, political and technological changes are taking place. These processes of change are also recognized in the educational world. Moreover, a lot of these changes lead to new and additional expectations towards schools, for example attention to children with special needs, the growth of information and communication technology, solving social problems (like drug abuse and the amount of problematic educational situations). Educational policymakers translate these changes into administrative procedures like permanent evaluation by the inspectorate, increased autonomy and at the same time enhanced accountability.

Several recent studies document how these changes in the policy contexts lead to more and new expectations for principals (Anderson, 1996; Bergen, Knoers and Sleegers, 1997; Biott and Rauch, 1997; Bolman and Deal, 1992; Curie and Rhodes, 1991; Daresh, 1998; Deal and Peterson, 1994; Duke, 1996; Imants, 1996; Leithwood and Steinbach, 1991; Murphy and Hallinger, 1992; Napier, 1997; Portin, 1998; Stoel, 1995; Southworth, 1998; Vandenberghe, 1995 en 1998; Verbiest, 1998; Weindling, 1998).

Since principals have not been trained for these new demands and tasks, they need specific professional development courses. Several organizations develop training programs aimed at the principals' professionalization. These professionalization activities are based on theories about effective leadership and adult learning. Moreover, it is clear that apart from the formalised training activities also informal and incidental learning processes, as well as biographical and contextual factors influence the professionalization of principals. Even more, the learning processes is highly determined by the self- regulation of the principal involved.

In this paper, we evaluate one possible answer to the principals' training needs, namely an intensive two-year training course in the Netherlands, called 'Magistrum'. Our research interest is formulated as follows: **'Is Magistrum –as an illustrative example of an intensive training- an effective answer to the principals' need for professional development?'**
In this paper we report on the preliminary findings because the data analysis is still in process.

Firstly, we briefly describe the conceptual framework, with the central idea of professional development as an interactive and contextualised learning process. Next, we report on the specific research approach in the study: the qualitative research by doing semi-structured interviews. Finally, we discuss of the preliminary results and provide conclusions.

2. Conceptual framework

Professional development is conceived of as a complex and life-long learning process throughout the career of teachers and principals. This learning process is based on concrete career experiences and takes places in a permanent interaction between the individual and the context (Kelchtermans, 1993 and 1999a; Vandenberghe and Clement, 1997). We take a constructivist, contextualised and interactionistic stance towards professional development.
In other words, developing and mastering the knowledge, attitudes and skills for competent leadership imply a lifelong learning process that takes place in a meaningful interaction between the learner (=in this case the principal) and the specific context. This context is to be understood as multi-levelled. For example, the socio-cultural level (characterized by uncertainty and lack of conceptual as well as normative clarity), the macro policy level (the new rules and demands of the government towards the principals), the context of the school as an organization, the contacts with colleague-principals, or the context of Magistrum training.

We conceive of the principals' professional development as an interaction of three clusters of determinants, namely, characteristics of Magistrum, characteristics of the individual principal and characteristics of the professional context. In the following parts, we briefly describe the determinants.

2. 1 The 'Magistrum' training

The aim of the Dutch training called 'Magistrum' is *'to train principals to become professionals being able to function as an inspiring educational manager of a school'.*

During two years, the participants are offered a combination of theoretical classes and practical support by trainers-coaches. Through a diversity of methods (self- study, formal lecture and seminars, training activities, inter-vision and study coaching), the course aims at a reflective integration of the curriculum and one's own work as a principal. In appendix, more detailed information about the 'Magistrum'-training program is offered.

2. 2 The principal

Professional development implies both more effective action and a qualitative evolution in the 'thinking' (professional 'know how') of the principals (Kelchtermans, 1993 and 1999a). Effective actions mean for example that principals are more effective in taking decisions, in creating learning situations for the teachers, in managing the school, in communicating with the parents, ... However, as Clement contends professional development can also be defined as an increased feeling of control, more flexibility in dealing with new demands in the job and a greater competence in accounting for one's practice (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). Clearly, the learning process not only results in

changes in teachers and principals' professional actions, but is also reflected at the level of cognitions. As Kelchtermans (1993) contends, the professional learning process culminates in a **personal interpretive framework**. This is a set of cognitions through which teachers and principals perceive their job situation, give meaning to it and act in it. Because it results from the individual learning process throughout the career, this personal interpretive framework is highly idiosyncratic. The professional interpretive framework encompasses two major and interwoven fields: a conception about themselves as a principal ('professional self') and a system of knowledge and believes concerning 'leading' as a professional activity ('subjective theory on leadership')[1].

First, the *professional self* of the principal refers to the beliefs and representations a principal has about him/herself. Like teaching, being a leader is a work that strongly involves one's person (Kelchtermans, 1999a; see also Nias, 1989). Within this professional self, Kelchtermans (1993) distinguishes 5 components:

-*Self image* (descripitive): This is the global characterisation of oneself: 'what am I like as a principal?'

-*Self esteem* (evaluative): This is the evaluation of oneself: 'how good am I doing as a principal?'

-*Job motivation* (conative): Here the principal thinks about: 'what motives made me choose to become, remain or quit being a school leader?'

-*Task perception* (normative): This is the way principals define their job: 'what must I do to be a good principal?' What is the 'personal professional programme' I am trying to achieve ? What do I consider to be part of my job and what not ? And why is that so ?' The answer operates as a personal programme and as a norm to evaluate one's own professional behaviour. What are the norms and values, the basic goals that I feel I need to achieve (or at least strive to) in order to be a good school leader.

-*Future perspective*: This contains the principal's expectations about the future development of his/her job situation and the way s/he feels about this: 'how do I perceive my future as a principal and how do I feel about it?'

Secondly, there is the *personal system of knowledge* and beliefs about leadership, the subjective theory on leadership, used by principals while performing their job. It is a personally ('subjective') ordered system ('theory') of knowledge and beliefs relevant for education and managing a school ('leadership'). The subjective theory results out of the experiences a principal has during his or her career and the way s/he more or less reflectively integrates them. The knowledge is thus "embodied experiential knowledge", embedded in the career experiences of the principal (Kelchtermans, 1993). Although it can be made explicit through reflection, the subjective theory largely operates unconsciously as a form of "tacit knowledge" (Schön, 1983). Because of its partly unconscious and experiential character, this know how can be incomplete, inadequate or simply wrong. Through intensive reflection, however, it can be made explicit and be confronted with other sources of knowledge (literature,

[1] Kelchtermans based his conceptual framework on findings with teachers (1993). A recent study showed also empirical evidence for this conceptualisation of professional development for principals (Janssen, 1999).

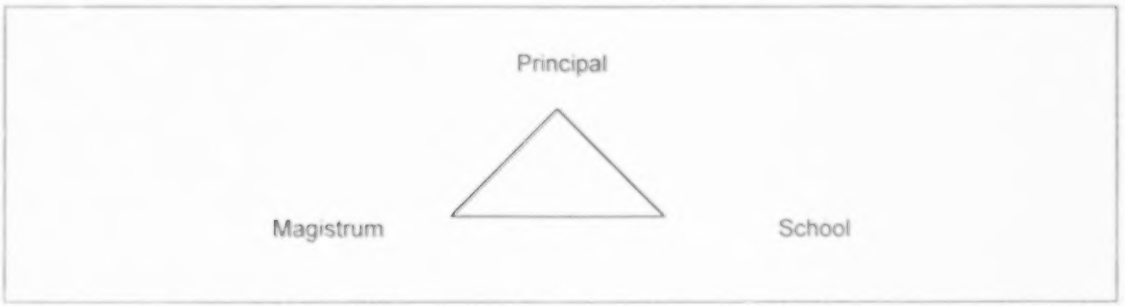
comments or stories by colleagues, etc.), it can be checked and –if necessary- adapted to the needs of the particular situation.

As already mentioned, the subjective theory develops out of the principal's formal and informal learning experiences and his/her day-to-day practice. The aim of Magistrum is to qualify principals, not only through achieving more skills, but also by stimulating reflection about their own conceptions and actions. Kelchtermans' concepts can thus be used as a theoretical framework in the evaluation of the Magistrum-training.

2. 3 The school context

Several studies revealed and documented the impact of the workplace conditions have an enormous impact on the teachers' and principals' professional development (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000; Clement, Staessens & Vandenberhge, 1994; Kelchtermans, 1994, 1999a; Vandenberghe & Clement, 1997). In the school context, we distinguish structural and cultural working conditions.[2] In this paper, we confine ourselves to the relationships between principal and staff members.

In sum, our conceptual framework offers analytical tools to understand principal's professional development as an individual but contextualised learning process. We are specially interested in the role of Magistrum in this process. We focus on three clusters of determinants and their interactions in a specific context in order to understand principals' development.



3. Methodology

From our research interest, focusing on principal's experiences and meaningful learning, it is obvious to opt for a **qualitative interpretive methodology** (Kelchtermans, 1993, 1999a and 1999b). We pay special attention to the (perceived) determinants (and the interactions between them) that influence the effects of the Magistrum-training.

[2] We realize that the difference between cultural and structural workplace conditions isn't always clear: structural conditions often imply cultural aspects (Clement & Vandenberghe, 2000). For example: the structure and the course of the staff meetings reveal a lot of cultural characteristics.

Our **research group** entails 9 principals who started their training in 1998 and will thus finish it in 2000. In this way, we were able to study principals' processes of professional development while participating in Magistrum. The criteria for selection were age, seniority as principal, gender, ...

For the **data collection**, we used a variant of Kelchtermans' procedure of 'autobiographical self thematisation' (1993, 1999a and 1999b). Aiming at collecting rich data, we combined a questionnaire and a cycle of semi-structured interviews (see e.g. Ballet, et al., in press). The interviews aimed at stimulating principals to reflect back on their career experiences and to tell their career stories and the place of Magistrum in it. The semi-structured interview addressed of three main themes:

- the role of a principal in a school as an organization (cultural and structural working conditions),
- the principal (personal interpretive framework) and
- the characteristics of Magistrum.

All the questions aimed at understanding the effects of Magistrum and identifying its determinants.
Data were collected in different steps. First, principals were asked to fill out the questionnaire (with data to be analysed in a quantitative and qualitative way). In a second phase, we did a semi-structured interview. After the first analysis of both sets of data, we fed out the preliminary findings back to the principals. This way the respondents could correct, complete and comment the investigators' interpretations. After one year (when the principals had started the second year of the training), a second questionnaire was offered and another interview took place. By collecting data at different moments, we were able to get a picture of the whole process principals go through during their Magistrum-training.

Data analysis followed data collection and thus also took place at different moments. Fist, we did a vertical or within-case analysis on the data of every principal (= one case study) (Merriam, 1998; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1989). This analysis should be understood as a chain of interpretive transformations of the data, and resulted in a synthesis text, that was fed back to the respondent for communicative validation during the final interview. The vertical analysis concentrated on the internal coherence and consistency of the individual story. All synthesis texts had a common structure, that was the basis for the second comparative analysis. In this horizontal analysis, the stories were compared systematically, looking for communities, remarkable differences, recurring patterns.

4. Results

In this part, we report about the preliminary findings of our first interview with the principals, who started the training in 1998. The interview took place after a half year of Magistrum.

First, we analyse the Magistrum-effects in terms of the principals' personal interpretive framework (Kelchtermans, 1993, 1999a). Then, we present some of the emerging patterns in the stories of the principals. Therefore, we base on the theory of Sikes, et al (1985).

4. 1 Changes in the personal interpretive framework

The general observation in this study is that all principals experience Magistrum as a contribution to their professional development. Using the theory of Kelchtermans about 'personal interpretive framework' as an analytical tool, remarkable changes in the professional self and the subjective theory on leadership occur during the process of Magistrum.

Almost all principals claim to have experienced an extension of their professional knowledge and skills. They got acquainted with new theoretical perspectives and other conceptions about education and leadership. Furthermore, Magistrum offers them an overview of the most important issues in school leadership. Several principals use the metaphor of *'pieces falling in their places in the puzzle'*. This new framework leads to new ways to interpret their professional reality, for example the (passive) attitude of teachers during staff meetings, the difficulties in contacts with parents or the ever changing regulations on staff hiring.
Moreover, during the training, the respondents become more aware of their own conceptions. They are constantly challenged to make their own theories and conceptions explicit. For some issues, this means that the principals have to adjust their conceptions. For example, M. Gere realised the fact that being a 'democratic leader' isn't appropriate in every situation. However, concerning other themes, they experience confirmation of their own subjective theory. For instance, M. Cole's attention to systematically work on vision is confirmed in Magistrum.

We did not only notice changes in the principals' subjective theory on leadership, but also in the development of their professional selves. Concerning job motivation, Magistrum stimulates the principals to develop professionally. It offers incentives to grow. As will be shown later, the concrete process of growing and the kind of 'stimuli' are a result of the interaction between Magistrum, the principal and the school context. For one principal Magistrum confirms and strengthens this job motivation. Another principal comes to the conclusion that the working conditions in his school just don't allow him to work in a motivated way and starts looking for another school.
Additionally, the future perspective of the principals is involved, because the principals reflect on the way they want to continue their job and the determinants to remain motivated in the future.

We also observed an evolution in the principals' task perception. They become better aware of the tasks involved in the principal's function: Magistrum presents them with an overview, a structured picture of the different tasks a principal has to take up nowadays. For example, almost every respondent referred to need to develop a shared vision in the school as one of the main ideas of their actual task perception. The general overviews of the principals' tasks are translated by the principals to the own context.

In this process, the principals also confront their task perception with self-image as a principal. The self image is thus becoming more extensive and profound. During the training, the principals' self awareness grows: awareness of their own characteristics, their strong and weak sides, aspects that may be improved... . Almost all respondents use the metaphor of the '*mirror*': each activity in the training implies reflecting on one's self. The most illustrative situation is the staff meeting: thanks to mutual observation and inter-vision/ feedback (during Magistrum) the participants get a better view of themselves. As M. Krew points out, he learnt to pay more attention to the processes during the staff meeting, and not only focus on the content.

The continuous comparison of the principals' tasks and the self image, inevitably includes an evaluative aspect. Most of the principals were aware of this evaluation at the start of Magistrum: the image of a 'little schoolboy at his first day' illustrates the fear of not being able to meet the requests of Magistrum. During the training, different observations in the respondents' self esteem occurred.

Most principals experience confirmation and reassurance by the training: they receive an overview of the principal's tasks and of ways to develop in that direction. As a consequence, the self confidence of some principals grows: they aren't doing too bad, according to what they learn Magistrum.

The experience of calming down, finding some rest and relaxation in their job is a second recurring observation for the Magistrum participants. The Magistrum curriculum emphasized that one needs rest to properly to fulfil the principal's function. The principals get a better idea of the way they can (or have to function), but they learn to take things easy and to take time for the development.

This is in contrast with the third observation: the feelings of restlessness. The doubts arising by the respondents do not always have negative effect on the functioning. Moreover, several principals talk about 'healthy doubts' as moments of reflection about their own behaviour and conceptions. However, a minority of respondents connects the restlessness with feelings of uncertainty. They admit their restlessness and stress because of the confrontation with all the things they still have to achieve and they don't know where to start.

In sum, Magistrum induces effects in the personal interpretive framework of the principals: in the job motivation, the task perception, the self image, the esteem and the future perspective. In the next part, we try to understand these changes and evolutions by reflecting on the interplay of the three clusters: Magistrum, the individual principal and the school as an organization.

4.2 Patterns of effects

As illustrated above, all principals mentioned the importance of Magistrum for their career. In terms of the personal interpretive framework, Magistrum thus induces changes. The concrete content -in which the evolution goes- is a result of the interplay between Magistrum, the individual principal and the school as an organization. In the stories of the principals, we discovered three groups of patterns. In the following parts, we describe them detailed. However, we first report on a general finding in all the stories, namely Magistrum functions for the principals as a safety island.

According to the stories of the principals, Magistrum functions as **a refuge.** In the times of lack of clarity and overwhelming demands, Magistrum offers a place to rest and reflect. It is a so-called 'time-out'. Every principal appreciates the opportunity to escape from the daily activities once every two weeks. This is not only in the figurative sense, but also in the literal: by going to another location, it is made possible to take distance from their daily concerns. This refuge creates possibilities to reflect on the own situation, on one's own function and on education in general.
For most of the principals, Magistrum also functions as a sort of support. More specifically, Magistrum translates the actual (policy) demands and expectations towards the principals into a framework of interwoven tasks. As a consequence, the participants experience more predictability. They feel they have a better overview and are more able to plan and organize their actions. In other words, Magistrum brings rest in the expectations towards the principals.
But it offers more: the principals can develop (thanks to the theories and practices) in a quiet context (without the daily stress) together with other principals. This implies an opportunity to hear about other situations, other coping strategies and other conceptions. However, this exchange among colleagues-principals also has a more profound effect: a social network is established of people sharing similar problems and challenges.
Returning from this safety island, almost every respondent feels stronger and more competent to cope with his/her job. S/he had the possibility to think everything over: for example, the direction in which to school has to evolve, the way s/he copes with problems, ... And after two weeks, it is possible to return and evaluate some interventions.

However, the concrete effect of the 'refuge-function' of Magistrum depends on the interaction between the individual principal and the school context. Analysing this interaction, we preliminary discovered three patterns in the nine stories of the principals. First, for four principals Magistrum functions as a 'surplus' for their professional development. For the five other principals, Magistrum was a critical incident, as described by Sikes et al. (1985).

Magistrum as an enhancement of the professional development

For four principals Magistrum functions as a means to continue in their job as they did before. The training, as described above, brings them more insights and more skills are trained. As a consequence of the continuous reflection on the principal's tasks and on themselves as principals, they formulate new challenges for their own school. Magistrum is seen as a contribution to continue the way they already were working. In the following story of M. Krew, we illustrate these findings.

M. Krew had worked for several years in the same school already (first as a teacher and since 11 years as a principal). There is a familiarity within the school team: not only professionally but also personally, it works out well. Participating in Magistrum to M. Krew is a means to develop new insights and skills necessary for the job of principal. Or as he points out: to prevent 'organizational blindness'. The theories and conceptions offered in Magistrum help him to develop his subjective theory. A lot of insights, built up during experiences in his career, are confirmed by Magistrum. The training also puts a lot of things in a theoretical framework: *'Something you already knew, now you can give a label'*. Not only theories about leadership and school as an organisation are offered, but M. Krew also discovers characteristics about himself. Through the activities (especially the mutual observations) Magistrum functions as a mirror. For example, the colleagues in Magistrum noticed that M. Krew speaks rather long-winded during the staff meetings. In the discussions afterwards, he became aware of other aspects of his behaviour. He now tries to take into account those things. Magistrum also meant a good opportunity for reflecting on new ideas to implement in his school. It was a means to qualify him to be more able to fulfil his tasks.

In this story, Magistrum contributes to increased competence for the job of principal. The principals learn a lot about the actual expectations and are confronted with theories and conceptions relevant for their tasks. The training is a place where they can reflect on their function, their professional self, their future perspective and where the development of a social network with colleague-principals is made possible.

Magistrum as a critical incident

However, according to five principals in this study, Magistrum had more pervasive consequences for their careers. Participating in Magistrum becomes to the respondents a critical incident (or phase).
With Sikes, et al. (1985) we use the concepts of critical incident and phase to label key events in the principal's life around which central decisions are made (see also Kelchtermans, 1993). Those decisions will have an significant influence on the further development of the principal's career. As it does in the former case, Magistrum made the principals reflect about their opinions and behaviour. Moreover, it confronts them with their theories of 'being a proper principal'. In one way or another, Magistrum 'touches' the principals and provokes a series of choices leading towards a break with the 'usual' flow of their career. Moreover, Magistrum leads to select particular kinds of actions, which lead

in particular directions that are remarkably different from their ways of action before Magistrum. To put it figuratively, thanks to Magistrum the principals get to see the light: they discover elements (about principals' tasks, about themselves, about education, about working) that provoke rather radical changes in their thinking and actions.

For five principals Magistrum turned out to function that way: the training reveals major choices, with remarkable differences with the period before the participation. In this pattern, two groups of situations can be found.

In the *first group*, Magistrum leads to qualitative different choices by the individual principal in his/ her school as an organization.
A first illustrative story is that of M. Cole as a starting principal. He consciously chooses to participate in Magistrum, because he wants to have tools (theories and skills) to fulfil his job properly. Magistrum gives him a lot of theories as background for his own subjective theory on leadership. Not only by the training, but also through contact with other principals, M. Cole receives a framework he uses to work more systematically in his school. Magistrum stimulates him to constantly reflect on his performance, his job, his school and the educational policy. For example, he is especially motivated to work on vision, together with the school team. He notices the passive attitude of the school team to participate in an open reflection about values, norms and the direction in which the school might evolve. Instead of changing from school or accepting the culture, he systematically works to change the school culture and he (and the team) is very enthusiastic about the results. He experiences a whole difference in approaching the things: thanks to the training he thinks and acts more systematically and more thoughtful. Magistrum implies a reassessment of his priorities: whereas before, he wanted to manage the school by fulfilling ad hoc-tasks, he now stimulates the school to develop towards a more professional institution, with the common mission of the school as a guideline. His orientation towards his job changed significantly.

Whereas in the story of M. Cole, Magistrum functions as a critical incident on the more technical dimension, for M. Van the changing characteristic was situated on the emotional dimension (see also Hargreaves, 1995). His start as a principal (several years ago) seemed an evidence: he had a lot of experience as a teacher and as a adjunct-principal. As adjunct he managed the school successfully since the principal was frequently absent. However, during the first years of his career as principal he experienced insecurity and self-doubts. He didn't feel to have any personal control of his job (see also Clement and Vandenberghe, 2000). In a meeting with the school board and the adjunct-principal, it was decided that M. Van should follow Magistrum as a means to become more self-confident as principal. The self-confidence of M. Van grows constantly during Magistrum: not only because of the (content and form of the) training, but also because of the intensive contacts with colleague-principals. M. Van gets the opportunity to reflect quietly about the direction the school can evolve, thanks to the overview of theories and frameworks offered in Magistrum. The confidence in himself (by Magistrum, the colleagues and himself) is central to the way M. Van now faces his task as principal.

As showed in this story, Magistrum works as a critical incident to M. Van by showing him parts of his self hitherto unknown and by putting the evolutions in the educational policy in a broader framework. Magistrum is a break with the self-doubts he had before starting Magistrum. The training reveals his choice to continue as principal and changes his attitudes in his work (Sikes et al., 1985). For him, Magistrum made the difference!

The *second 'critical' group* consists of two other principals for whom Magistrum was a critical incident in making them decide to leave their school and find other job opportunities.
The first story is from M. Gere. To be able to cope more successfully with the current expectations towards principals, he participated in Magistrum. In Magistrum he gets a complete picture of the expectations and demands towards nowadays' principals. Looking at his own school –where he already worked for a long time, he didn't see any possibility to meet these expectations. The small school team he was working with was familiar and the atmosphere was extremely cosy. There wasn't any stimulation to grow towards a professional school. He predicts that it would be very difficult to develop towards a learning organization in this 'cosy' team. Thanks to Magistrum he discovers other schools and other contexts. So he feels attracted to a new school, with much more pupils and a bigger team. In his eyes, he didn't dare to take the challenge to apply for another job in another school, but thanks to Magistrum he made the step. *"Thanks to Magistrum I had the idea 'That's the way I have to function. But now, I don't. (...) I see what is expected, but I can't realize it in this school. So I choose another school."* However, this insight was not the most 'critical' effect of Magistrum. According to M. Gere, thanks to Magistrum he was more self-assured during the job interview. *"I feel more self-assured thanks to Magistrum. I feel I know what I am talking about. (...) I better understand what 'staff hiring policy' means, what a 'learning organization' means. (...) Thus one simply makes a better impression. Both in interviews and letters. (...) And without Magistrum I would tried it too, but I think I wouldn't be able to give the appropriate answers during the interview. (...) And now, you can answer more adequately. And the self confidence too is important to get a job. So, I don't think I would have gotten the job without Magistrum."*
Participating in Magistrum to M. Gere is a key event containing a break-up with his current professional behaviour. But it also implied changes in his personal life: M. Gere applied for a job in a school at the other side of the country. This means that his whole family had to move: they had to look for a new house, they had to develop new social contacts, ... The current life of the family dramatically is changed due to Magistrum, not only professionally, but also personally.

A second story illustrates another way in which Magistrum became a critical incident. After only two years of being an adjunct-principal, Mrs. Butterfly accepted the function of principal. Magistrum to her was a means to develop both as a principal and as a person. She is very enthusiastic about the ideas and conceptions in Magistrum. For example, every time she returns from the training, she is bursting with impatience to change some aspects in her school towards a more professional school. However, the team doesn't always appreciate her innovations and calls on her to slow down. The teachers are not always ready to change at her pace. She compares herself with an elephant in a china cabin.

Additionally, during the training Mrs. Butterfly discovers and develops a whole series of personal qualities. For example, she discovers her skills as a coach of beginning teachers and explicate her aspirations to work in training programs for adults. Further, she also becomes more aware of the things she dislikes about her job: the priority of ad hoc tasks, the pressure to keep up the number of pupils in the school, that interfere with her motivations to pay more attention to the policies of school. The awareness of all those things brought her to the decision to quit school and look for another job in the educational world, moreover as a coach of beginning teachers in her school board. Being a principal doesn't attract her anymore. She points at the influence of Magistrum in this process of becoming more aware of her qualities, her priorities and ambitions.

Whether Magistrum becomes a critical incident to the principals, depends on the interplay of factors in Magistrum, in the individual principal and in the school context. The 'kind' of critical incident is also influenced by this relation. To M. Cole the meaning of Magistrum is more technical, namely providing sufficient tools to develop a high quality of education in the school. To M. Van the training has a more emotional meaning: he gains the self-confidence needed to continue his work as principal. The evolution towards the critical incident is also influenced by context: M. Gere got insight in his organization and discovered that he would never be able to meet the norm of a 'good' principal if he stayed in this former school. So he chose a career in another school.
For all five principals Magistrum is an event (or phase, because it lasts for 2 years) which breaks up the evidences of their current professional behaviour. In other words, critical incidents are key events which force the principals to make decisions which influence their further development (as well professionally as personally) (Sikes, et al., 1985).

In sum, the data suggest Magistrum is a time-out for the principals. The training offers them ways to 'refuel', away from the concrete daily context. They can take a break while studying new theories, skills, visions, ... And this happens in intensive exchanges with other principals, who have to cope with the same challenges.
But as mentioned before, the way they cope with the opportunities of the 'safety island', depends on the interaction between the individual principal, the concrete school context and Magistrum. We discovered two patterns in the meanings of the 'time-out'. For four principals Magistrum is a way to refuel (technically –through new knowledge and skills- as well as emotionally) and return to the school. It is an ideal way to receive more insights and skills to continue their job.
However, for five principals the 'refuelling'-function of Magistrum leads to more fundamental changes in their perspective. Magistrum made them to broaden their view . They make pivotal choices leading to changes in the further development of their career.

Whether Magistrum has long-term effects, yet has to be studied more profoundly. In our study (which is still going on), we try to get a picture of those long-term effects by doing a follow-up interview with the respondents. Additionally, we also include in this study principals who finished the 'Magistrum-training' three years ago. In this way, we try to finds confirmations for our hypotheses.

5. Conclusions and discussion

Before formulating some points of discussion, we notice another effect of Magistrum. The training offers the principals a **vocabulary,** a language to use in the educational context. According to all the principals, Magistrum leads to an extension of their knowledge and skills. It often enhances their feeling of personal competency: they master more concepts and terms. Confrontation with and discussion of the theories, give the principals a common language. A lot of words, for example 'learning organization', now get a concrete content for the respondents. Furthermore, it offers a common language for the participants: they feel more connected. Not only the participants in Magistrum share a similar educational vocabulary, but also educational policymakers use those words. Now, the principals are more able to understand the policy texts and to communicate with those instances. Not only at that level, but also in the school board, they now speak the same language. This opportunity to participate in more discussions also has a symbolic meaning. In micropolitcal terms, mastering the vocabulary can be understood as a tool of power (Ball, 1994; Blase and Anderson, 1995; Kelchtermans, 1999). Micropolitics is about strategies of power and influence individuals and groups in organisational contexts use to obtain and protect their interests (Kelchtermans & Ballet, 2000). For example, thanks to the vocabulary, the principals now really can be part of the decision making. According to M. Gere, his vocabulary (and moreover, his comprehension) lead him to his new job in another school: speaking to same language as does the selection commission was a means to certify his position.

As sharing the same vocabulary may lead to a stronger position of the principal in the school board and in policy contexts, it also can induce gaps between the principal and the school team. The most illustrative example is that of Mrs. Butterfly. In discussion with teachers or during meetings, she frequently uses words learnt and internalised in the context of the training. However, the school team doesn't speak that language doesn't even understand their meaning. The team feels threatened and in some cases even incompetent, because they just don't understand the words of their principal anymore. The vocabulary then becomes a barrier between the principal and the school team.
Some principals are very cautious using the words and insights learnt in Magistrum. According to some respondents, Magistrum pays attention to this threat of disconnection between the parties. However, as we want to show in this study, it also depends on the interaction between the principal and the concrete school as organization whether the tuning can cause problems.

In this first report on this evaluative study of a intense training for principals, some remarkable issues revealed. In the first place, Magistrum leads to significant changes in the personal interpretive framework of the participating principal. But as contended and illustrated in this study, the interplay between the individual principal, the school as organization and Magistrum, influences the effects of Magistrum. The overall experience of Magistrum as a refuge, works out in two different pattern. For a first group, Magistrum was an enhancement of their professional development. These principals

were enthusiastic about the things they learn and think over. Moreover, Magistrum stimulates them to continue the way they are working. Whereas Magistrum for them is a an element of a gradual development, it means for the second group a break with the current situation. In other words, the second pattern is one of Magistrum as a critical incident: a key event with a significant influence on the further development of the principals career.

However, in all illustrations we also notice a possible tension between the principal's professional development and the professional development of the school. It seems that the one of the principal does not automatically result in a school development. The most striking illustrations are the stories of Mrs. Butterfly –who discovers other qualities beside leading a school- and M. Gere, who need to go to another school to feel as a proper principal.

6. Literature

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Appendix: The Magistrum- training

1.Origin of the Magistrum-program

At the end of the 80-ties it became clear that the situation in education management for primary schools changed thoroughly. In the early 90-ties some institutions for higher education started in-service training programmes for schoolleaders.
In 1993 out of negotiations between government, teacher-unions and organisations of schoolboards, funds were raised to realise a training-program, in the first place for principals already in function, and lasting two years, one day a week. Noteworthy is the fact that the government also give financial support to the schoolboard to replace the students when they are following the course. On the base of an offer, four (later five) universities for professional education were assigned to realise such a training-program. One of this universities, Fontys Hogescholen, in co-operation with other Teacher Training Colleges and KPC group developed a new curriculum for educational management. This curriculum, recognised and financed by the government, is presented to the educational field as *"**Magistrum**"*. Since 1994, each year 150 principals start to study the *"Magistrum"*- programme, which is organised on several locations in the Netherlands.

2 The idea of an empowered schoolleader

The aim of a curriculum for schoolleaders must be to empower the student in order to endow her or him with more competence for being a good schoolleader. What is the concept of empowered schoolleaders in the Magistrum-program? There are different sources from which the idea of an empowered schoolleader is derived.

Job-profiles of schoolleaders: a job profile is an ordered, time-bounded, description of tasks to carry out by the schoolleader and of characteristics, the schoolleader must dispose of, in order to function well. Different general job-profiles were formulated, for example by the government and by representatives of the schoolleaders and schoolboards.

The concept of integral schoolleadership. Based on a typology of effectiveness in organisations (Quine c.s.1994, Van Wieringen, 1995), one can distinguish between four types of schoolleaders:

- the *administrator*, who co-ordinates and controls the organisation, the funds and so on;
- the schoolleader as a *human resource-leader*, who cares for a good work-climate and good relations in the team;
- the schoolleader as an *instructional leader* with a strong impact on the program and the methods;
- the schoolleader as an *entrepreneur* who is looking for the continuity and growth of the school.

Of course, first and foremost, the results of the pupils are very important - as brought forward by the Effective School-movement. But those results are depending on different factors in the realm of administration, the human relations and the extern environment. The influence of the schoolleader on the results of the pupils is more indirect (Imants, 1996; Sleegers, 1999; Van den Berg en Vandenberghe, 1999), for example by co-ordinating the curriculum, by formulating a vision, by influencing the culture of the school, by stimulating co-operation between the teachers, by coaching teachers and so on. Only by purposeful, consistently sustained acting in the different areas, the schoolleader ca contribute to good results the pupils. So, a schoolleader must be competent in all areas and function as an integral leader, who can view the schoolsituation in the context of a larger mission and long-term policy in the school, with – as an overwhelming purpose, the care for good education. As a schoolleader he or she shall try to enhance the results of the pupils not only by a programmatic influence but also by administrative and human-relations management as well as entrepreneurship (Verbiest, 1996, 1998).

3. *The concept of transformational leadership*: Experiences with innovation processes have shown that the schoolleader's influence is less based on his official status, derived from his formal position of leadership. As opposed to the corporate world two other sources of power are considered important: the power of expertise (knowledge of learning processes and educational competencies that can be used to guide curriculum development and to supervise teachers) and "transformational power" (the capacity to enhance individual and collective problem-solving processes; the ability to create a commonly shared professional culture of co-operation; the ability to stimulate teachers to develop professionally within the context of the development of the school; teachers, the team and other involved parties to signal problems and solve them together) (Fullan, 1992; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood, Begley, Cousins, 1992; Murphy and Hallinger, 1992). The concept of *transformation* has a complementary nature: leadership can be seen in the perspective of the enhancement of the potential of those involved in a particular organisation (Van den Berg en Vandenberghe,1995).

The schoolleader as a reflective practitioner. Many problems in the schoolleader's practice - for example problems related to the implementation of innovations, such as how to handle the so-called resistance of teachers - are characterised by conflicts of values, complexity, instability and insecurity. It is not always clear what the actual problem is. Therefore problems are not simply solved by applying specific knowledge to well-defined situations. The confrontation with practical problems demands logical and creative processes, regarding the situation with different eyes, from a different perspective. Does a particular teacher's reaction express resistance or rather a certain concern? This implies - often simultaneously with the actions as such - reflection on and a revision of one's own actions and the knowledge already present, which will lead to the development, application and testing of new insights based on the situation. An important role in this process is played by the schoolleader's interpretations, objectives, principles and values, constraints, solving processes and emotions (Schön, 1983, 1987; Leithwood, Begley, Cousins, 1992). Some stages can be distinguished in this process of professional problem-solving, for example: action, reflection, conceptualisation and taking decisions (Kolb, 1984). Therefore one can consider

schoolleaders as professional problem solvers or reflective practitioners, in that one demand from them that they solve practical problems systematically and creatively, using relatively high-grade information (Leithwood, Begley, Cousins, 1992).

3 Didactical principles

The didactical approach is based on active and reflective learning by adult professionals. Important basic assumptions, concerning this didactical approach in this in-service program are described as follows.

1. Modern learning psychology stress the *constructive character of learning*. People learn by an active process of fitting new knowledge into already existing frameworks (habits of thoughts). Furthermore, those influence the way how schoolleaders see a situation, what they find interesting or not, what they think they can do and can't. Learning therefore is not a passive process, where the learner absorbs knowledge, but an active process, where the learner constructs his own new meanings (Vermunt, 1992). It is important that schoolleaders be aware of the characteristics of their own frameworks in order to adjust new information and to grasp and improve their own actions (Lodewijks, 1993). The crucial question is what requirements an environment conducive to learning should meet. A number of things can be pointed out in this context. Learning should take place in a meaningful context, while the learning activity ought to be aimed at understanding and using the material learned. Learning environments should invite the learner's activities. Given the constructive character of the learning process, there must also be attention for the integration of new learning contents with those already present. Making explicit existing (subjective) concepts, also about learning itself, stimulated by intra- and inter-personal reflection is important here.

2. *Learning by adults:* Adult learning is often said to proceed differently from that of children and adolescents and adults are said to have different preferences as to how learning processes unfold. These differences arguably are connected with the different social position of the adult, his more extensive experience and different motivation. Especially this latter aspect is often considered important. Important methodological consequences which can be formulated on the basis of our understanding of adult learning correspond with what was said previously. learning. A climate of mutual respect between participants and trainers, participation in and responsibility for one's own learning, room for teaching each other, stressing learning on the basis of experience, linking theory and practice and the importance of problem or task-orientated learning are all brought to the attention in this context (Knowles, 1987; Leithwood, Begley, Cousins, 1992; Bolhuis en Simons, 1999).

3. *Close to practice:* Learning close to the practical situation can be realised by trying to find problems and applications in the schoolleaders' own practice, one's own school now being the subject of attention and study. A possible side effect could be that in this way schoolleaders can work on problems actually existing at their schools through training courses or that they can implement new policies that need to be implemented anyway. Examples are the (further) development a specific schooling concept, the introduction of performance interviews at the school, the introduction of a coaching system, or drawing up work instructions for new staff members in order to give shape to the religious or philosophical identity of the school.

4. *Peer learning:* So far it will be made clear that reflection on perceptions of the schoolleader's task and function and on learning are of importance. Peer learning plays a crucial role in this reflection: teaching and learning in conjunction with others. Many learning activities can be carried out in groups, with participants systematically interviewing each other and providing mutual feedback.

4 The Magistrum-program

The curriculum is carried out in groups of ca. 18 persons, staying together for two years. An important role is playing by the staffmember who is leading a group. Those staffmembers are experienced schoolleaders, who are working one day a week for Magistrum. Thanks to their experience, the can easily bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Before starting the *"Magistrum"*-programme there is an intake with each individual to check up and clarify expectations and to exchange information about backgrounds, context and motivation of the students
The curriculum – that last in total 680 hours in two years – contains of different themes, assembled in so called modules, that cover the four areas of schoolleader-competence. The modules are now (in the first year) *educational policy and the school as an organisation*, *leadership*, *the concept and identity of the school*, *human resource management*, *the school as a learning organisation*, and (in the second year) *innovation management and quality management*, *coaching of teachers*, *financial management*. Furthermore there is a possibility to choose one or two other modules such as *teambuilding* or *schoolleader and information-and communication technology*.
The importance of integrated leadership was pointed out before. The schoolleader acts on the basis of his perception of good education and tries to achieve this kind of education by undertaking and co-ordinating actions from various task areas. Financial policies, quality control, professionalization and so on, always require to be situated in this integrated perspective: what vision of education is the schoolleader trying to achieve? So all modules are related to the instructional and pedagogical tasks of the school (the mission of the school). In this way the content in the curriculum is strongly influenced by the four areas of schoolleader-effectivity and the concept of integral leadership. Some modules can be utilised in different areas (for instance, the modules as *human resource management* or *financial management* has not only to do with the administrative task of the schoolleader, but also with human relations-management).

The idea, the content and the skills of transformational leadership are emphasised in all modules, but especially in modules like *educational policy and the school as an organisation*, *leadership*, *the school as a learning organisation*, *innovation management and quality management*, and *coaching of teachers*.

The concept of the schoolleader as an reflective practitioner can be recognised in the didactical approach, that is used in the program.
From a didactical point of view, one can see different measures. Among them are rather traditional working methods as lectures, skill-training, discussions in small groups, coaching and so on. But there are also other measures :

- *Making learning styles explicit*. People's ideas about learning affect their future learning. An adequate learning style, characterised by instilling significance and application by the learner, requires specific learning competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes). Less adequate learning styles do not change of their own accord by just changing the means and methods of instruction, e.g. by presenting practical problems and practical opportunities for processing. As a first step in the acquisition of adequate ideas about learning and learning styles, making the learning concepts of schoolleaders in training courses is of importance. In the intake, by means of a questionnaire, the learning styles are revealed and discussed with the learners involved.

- *Reflection on subjective frame-works*: For example, participants started the topic of strategic management (in the module *educational policy and the school as an organisation)* by reading a text about this subject. Then they had to answer questions about the place strategic management have in their schools: is there something like strategic management in there schools; why or why not; how much time do the spend at strategic management; which methods they use and so on. Reading the text and answering the questions is home-work. The program continues with a discussion about the answers of the participants; first in small groups and then a plenary discussion. The teacher leads the discussion to make clear what place strategic management has in the minds of the students, which essential steps they take or don't and so on. In this way the subjective frameworks about strategic management become rather more conscious, the participants have learned from each other and are prepared to investigate further the subject of strategic management.

- *Intervision*: in small groups (6 persons), without an external leader, the students investigate the functioning of one member as a schoolleader, analysing a particular problem of that member, his actions, the underlying framework, the patterns in his actions and thinking. Furthermore they are looking for alternative ways of thinking and acting. In this way, they learn a lot from each other, and integrate theory into practice. There are about twelve sessions of three hours during the program, in the same group. In the beginning of the program the students have received a training in intervision (goals, method, way of reporting).

- *Work-place learning*. The modules or combinations of modules are finished by tasks, students have to carry out in their own situation, and for the benefit of their own school. For example: analysing the conditions of the own school for the implementation of a system of quality control; or formulating, with the team, a schoolmission. In the last part of the curriculum the students have to make a *masterpiece*. They have to introduce and carry out a diagnosis of the school or to implement a change program, for example the implementation of a management information system or a system for coaching teachers.

- *Learning through case and expert:* Case descriptions, derived from the schoolleaders' practice - e.g. the implementation of a central management - can be treated systematically. Systematically in this context means that the steps contemplation, thinking, deciding and acting of the learning cycle (Kolb 1984) are taken explicitly and systematically. A number of methodological recommendations can be formulated for each step, so that the steps can be carried out as well as possible and the pattern of the learning cycle can be trained. The realistic nature of this learning situation can be increased by having an experienced schoolleader - who has practical experience of the problem concerned - participate in the treatment of the case. This expert can supply additional information as to how he/she has reflected on the situation concerned, analysed it, which objectives were set, how he/she adjusted his / her perceptions in the course of the actual process, etc. Thus thinking and acting can be practised in terms of the learning cycle, so that it develops into a fixed operational procedure when the schoolleader is faced with a problem situation (Verbiest and te Lintelo, 1996).